

November 2017

ILLUMINATIONS

quarterly publication of the Historical Society of University City



Mayor Welsch

Spring Events

State of the City returns

Our first program of 2018 will be The State of the City, with Mayor Shelley Welsch talking about the issues and choices facing University City in this election year. It is scheduled for March 6. More information will be in February *Illuminations*.

We will also be hosting the Spring meeting of St. Louis regional historical societies. The date will be April 15. Our guests will tour City Hall starting at 2 pm and the meeting will begin at 3 pm in the City Council chambers.

UCHS News

Recent developments

Archivist Sue Rehkopf has arranged the digitization of University City's first tax ledger. The 111 year-old ledger is cumbersome and water-damaged, which makes difficulties for archivists seeking to establish

the dates of construction of possible Century Homes. Digitization will make the information much more accessible. We thank former board-member Judy Little for the gift that made it possible.

The Historical Society was pleased to participate in the U City in Bloom Garden Tour in September. The tour was held in University Heights #1, the city's oldest subdivision, where founder E.G. Lewis lived. In addition to gardens, the tour highlighted the neighborhood's many Century Homes, which display plaques provided by the HSUC.

Finally, we mark the passing of Juliette Rosenblatt, who died Nov. 1. She was one of the early boardmembers of the Historical Society, starting in 1983. A willing and able volunteer, she found the craftsman who made the table still in use in our office. She hosted many meetings in her art-filled house and played a key role in establishing the annual Quilt Show.



Boardmember Liz Beall Poelker provides literature about Lewis Park, formerly the grounds of Mayor Lewis's house, to tour participants.

Annual Meeting

All Saints Windows

At the annual dinner meeting, held Oct. 17 at the library, UMSL professor Jon McGinnis gave an illustrated lecture on the stained glass windows of All Saints Church. All Saints parish was founded in 1901. When its wooden church north of Olive burned down, the archdiocese shifted the parish south to the new North Parkview subdivision, expecting the new apartment buildings to fill up with Irish Catholics. That didn't happen, but the parish established itself in the building now called Ryan Hall, which was used for services, offices and school. In 1937, the present church was completed. It was not in the favored basilica style because of the unusual shape of the lot. Architect Sidney Lee proposed the unusual octagonal shape. Emil Frei did the windows. Eight take the Beatitudes as their theme. The windows in the north choir loft have Mary as their subject. One of the sanctuary windows depicts Lazarus. One has the good Samaritan as its subject. Others show Abraham and Isaac, and Jesus washing his disciples' feet. One window that shows Daniel in the lion's den is often mistaken for a scene in purgatory. St. Florian, patron saint of firefighters, gets a window, as does St. Michael, patron saint of the police. In another, St. Patrick baptizes King Angus, accidentally putting a spear through the his foot, a detail that delights children in Sunday school classes, in which McGinnis uses the windows as teaching aids. Frei loved to make puns. A window showing Jesus as the good shepherd with his flock refers to Nicholas Lamb Jr, a prominent parishioner and benefactor of the church as well as a political ally of EG Lewis.

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Regional Meeting

What other societies are up to

In September, Clayton hosted the semiannual meeting of regional historical societies, with tours of the Hanley House and a meeting with abundant refreshments at the Center of Clayton. Daniel Gonzales, St. Louis county preservation historian, distributed a directory of local history groups. Stephen Hanpeter of Sappington-Concord announced that he is preparing a second environmental history series of talks for Spring 2018. Then representatives of each society talked about their current activities. Wildwood is hosting a bus tour of WWI historic sites and is about to publish a book on early churches of West County. The archdiocese is holding an open house in October and a talk about the New Madrid fault in November. Aeronautical reports membership is growing and research requests are pouring in. Their goal is an aviation hall of fame for Missouri. St. Charles holds quarterly lunches with speakers and a genealogy day in November. A recent historic house tour was a big success. Lafayette Square is the newest local society. It is working on its archives, which hold documents going back to 1836. Ste. Genevieve sponsors a Halloween event and is planning the French Heritage Festival house tour for next summer. Overland holds a candlelight tour of its log farmhouse in December. Sappington House is holding an archeology day; attendees can throw a tomahawk or fire a musket. St. Louis County library hosts occasional genealogy days at its Headquarters. The St. Louis Genealogical society is celebrating its 50th anniversary by publishing a history of local orphanages. Webster Groves is seeking to make maps and newspapers from its archives available to the public via the Webster public library. Their Hawken House gardens won a pollinator award. They've added a seventh to their Webster walk series. Bridgeton held a successful event with a quilt appraiser. Hazelwood has put a new roof on its 1852 schoolhouse.

The American Woman's Republic

Interesting article about early U City history, summarized by Liz Beall Poelker

The recently published article "School for Suffrage: The American Woman's Republic" by Michael David Cohen, published by Penn State University Press in *The Good Society*, Vol. 25 (www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/goodsociety.25.2-3.0209) sheds light on the political significance of what may be called E.G. and Mabel Lewis's pinnacle achievement—the creation of the American Woman's Republic (AWR).

The article traces the origins of the Lewises' enterprises in St. Louis—women's magazines, "mail-in" bank, People's University with its emphasis on correspondence courses, the American Woman's League, and the American Woman's Republic. It places these efforts in the context of what was "trending" in American culture around the turn of the 20th century. These endeavors originally had a two-pronged purpose: strengthening women's roles as mothers and workers and providing commercial success for the Lewises.

It points out that political involvement was not originally a goal of these efforts. However, in 1908 *The Woman's Magazine* started reporting on the US women's suffrage movement. The magazine took a firm stand starting in 1909 in agreement with the common arguments of the contemporary suffrage activists: men had failed at governing, female votes were necessary to promote good laws that men had not, white women's votes would counteract the "undesirable" votes of African American, Native American, and immigrant men. To promote

this political vision E. G. Lewis announced the formation of the American Woman's Republic.

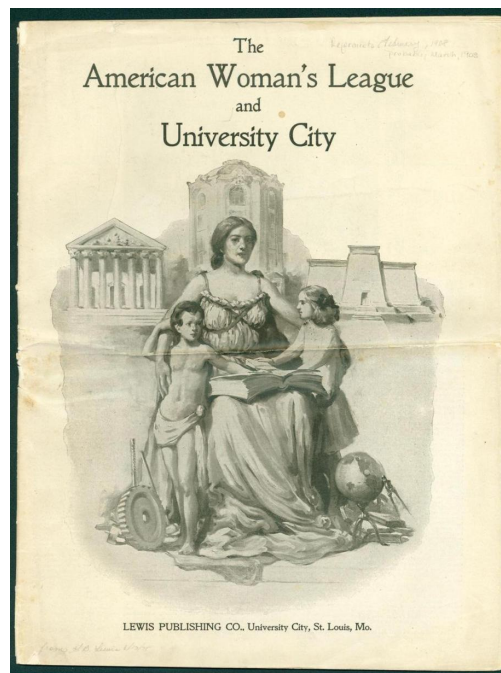
At first the AWR joined the mainstream women's suffrage movement as lobbyists. But activism for suffrage was never the AWR's primary focus. In keeping with the Lewises' other enterprises, the AWR made education the foundation of its political efforts. In addition to working for women's vote, the AWR prepared them to use it.

Cohen elaborates on the development of the AWR. Relevant courses at the People's University were an obvious first step. However,

the AWR went further than other attempts at civic education. In addition to understanding the political system, women were enabled to prepare themselves to govern the country side-by-side with men. The AWR was a government parallel to and based on the US government; it had a president, a cabinet, and a congress. As significant as its structures, it held elections to fill these posts giving members the "actual experience" of participating in elections and serving in the elected positions. Like the US government, the AWR accepted or encouraged the disenfranchisement of others; specifically non-white women were excluded.

The AWR's vision was that after women were granted suffrage they would vote to secure laws for children's protection and to ban war. They would become the most powerful political party in the country: native-born white women would transform democracy.

This vision was never fulfilled and the AWR failed. The author examines the combination of forces which led to the failure but he concludes that "despite its failure as an organization the American Woman's Republic built upon and furthered the United States' long-held commitment to formal education as a bulwark of democracy." Anyone interested in U City history will find this article enlightening.



Cover of a Lewis Pub. Co. booklet about the American Woman's League

The Historical Society of University City
6701 Delmar Blvd.
University City MO 63130

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Quilt Show

Brightening library

by Gwen Clopton

For 27 days in October, our familiar University City Library transformed into a showcase of quilted art made by members of the Circle in the Square Quilters. The second floor balcony displayed large quilts that featured bold geometries and elaborate designs. The natural light spilling into the upstairs gallery illuminated small challenge quilts and meticulously stitched masterpieces, from traditional to modern.

Since 1984, the Quintessential Quilt show has been a part of the fabric of our community, with the support of the University City Historical Society for most of it. This year, the focus was on member talent creating the 60 large and small quilts. Members chose the winners, while the public selected the viewer's choice award. The winning quilts were honored with handcrafted quilt ribbons and products donated by local quilt shops. In the words of one viewer, the show presented "a beautiful world of wide-ranging and stunning creativity!"

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In her remarks, President Eleanor Mullin thanked library director Patrick Wall and called the University City Public Library "our connection to the community." She also thanked Councilmember Paulette Carr for attending, and welcomed new boardmembers Barbara Stulac and Caryn St. Clair. Centerpieces by boardmember Judy Prange graced the dining tables.

Historical Society of University City

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